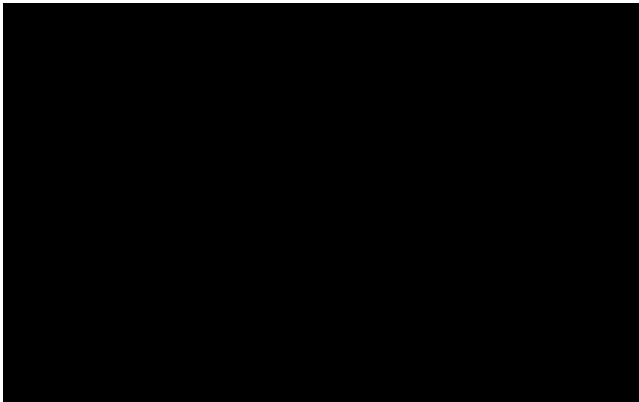


Joint Task Force Shining Hope The Real TOP DOLLAR

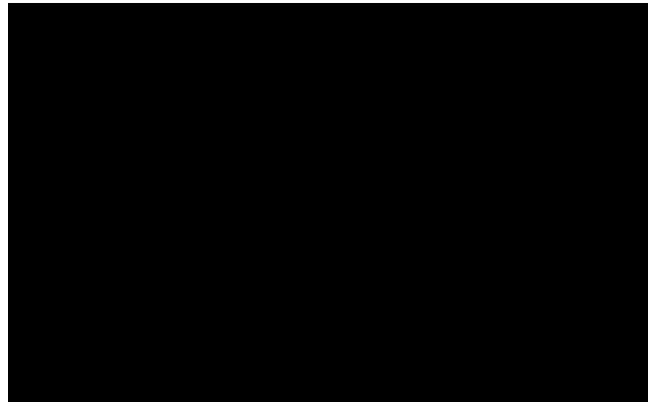


by Lt Colonel Randy Newcome

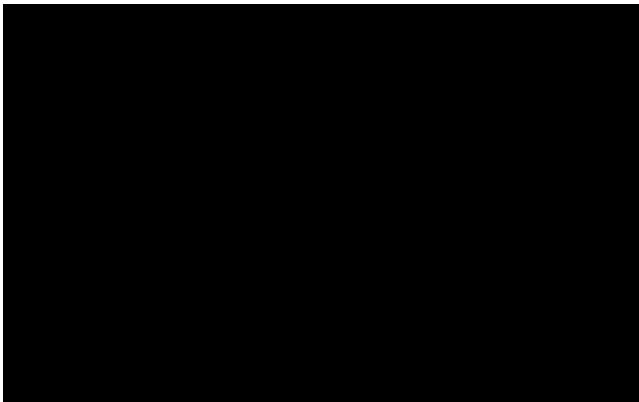
Photographs courtesy of Lt Colonel Yolanda Grove



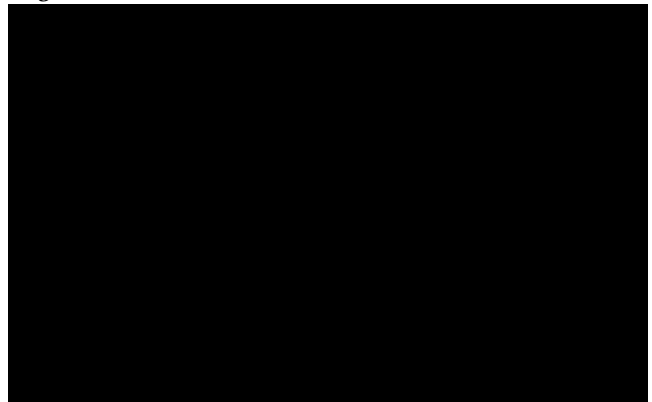
Senior Airman Cliff VanGieson, Paying Agent, Tirana, Albania.



Lt Col Newcome, 86 CPTS/CC, and TSgt Jim Turro, Disbursing Agent, Tirana, Albania.



Lt Col Yolanda Grove, SAF/FM War Planner, and Lt Col Randy Newcome, 86th CPTS/CC.



C-130 for an engine-running offload at Rinas Airport.

It's time to get out of power-point and get in the air! said General Jumper, COMUSAFE. With that direction, the Joint Task Force SHINING HOPE commander, **Maj Gen Hinton**, ordered the newly activated 86th Contingency Response Group (CRG) to deploy to Tirana, Albania, on Easter Sunday, 4 April 1999. Over the next two months, USAFE FM personnel continuously supported JTF-SH on three fronts—the EUCOM site survey to Tirana, the actual deployment itself, and the standup of JTF-SH headquarters in Einsiedlerhof, adjacent to Ramstein Air Base. The following is a short summary of those first two months with FM at the **tip of the spear**.

The 86th CPTS deployed a paying agent (PA) to support the EUCOM site survey team leaving for Tirana. For this short notice tasker, we picked our best Top Dollar qualified person. **SrA Cliff VanGieson** left with \$200K in checks, \$200K on AF 616, \$24K in cash, laptop with printer, mini-logdet kit, one-drawer safe, a passport, and a 9mm. Due to the critically high criminal and terrorist threat present when the team arrived, the US Embassy confiscated both the contracting officer's (CO) and PA's weapons, signed for the safe and its contents, and locked-down the two of them in a hotel in downtown Tirana. The only travel authorized was in *hard cars* with armed escorts.

Nevertheless, both individuals went to work and quickly established contact with the CRG that same day. They immediately started contracting for hotels, cellular phones, and vehicles. Getting cellular phone capability was particularly difficult since it required Ministry of Defense approval to get the *chips* released. Helping coordinate these efforts was the 86 CPTS unit control center. We staffed the orderly room for 24-hour operations so deployed agents had a central contact point to speak with daily. The commander also had STU-III capability so often required for these operations.

Within 48 hours, over 150 CRG personnel were deployed in Tirana. This included another CO and our disbursing agent (DA), TSgt Jim Turro with a mini-logdet kit and two-drawer safe that they secured with CRG Security Forces at Rinas airport. TSgt Turro had \$200K in checks, \$500K on AF 616, \$100K in cash, laptop with ABS, 9mm, and bulletproof vests. Shortly thereafter, the EUCOM site survey personnel departed but the CO and PA **chopped** to the CRG/CC to provide much needed support. Without the additional manpower, it would have been impossible to get the *bare base* operational in minimal time.

By the 96-hour point, with CRG/CC serving as on-site commander, the JTF assumed responsibility for SHINING HOPE. At this point, the Embassy lifted travel restrictions and returned our safe and weapons. All payments up to then had been made in US dollars. One agent and CO stayed at Rinas airport to pay for deliveries while the DA remained downtown with a CO to continue negotiations and small dollar purchases on IMPAC and in the local currency. All four personnel were armed, wore civilian clothes, and bulletproof vests when operating off-base.

During the first week, both agents paid vendors from 0700 until 2300 with balancing performed daily. Payments averaged \$14,000 daily to over \$27,000 per day the third week. By then the camp population had grown to over 500 personnel and check cashing was done two hours daily (1100-1300), every other day, since AAFES field capability was limited. Through discussions with USAFE/FM, it was decided to fly cash in every 10 days to remove the obvious threat of off-base transport.

The CRG/CC held daily staff meetings where our agents collected the next day's requirements to turn a mud pit into an operational airfield. Beddown needs included gravel for the tent city, plywood for floors, porta-potties, trash removal, potable water, ground fuel, etc. They also did everything from direct vendor truck traffic to digging ditches to help channel the water out of the camp. Whatever couldn't be bought locally was called back to Ramstein and airlifted downrange.

Coincident with the buildup at Rinas airport was the standup of the JTF staff in Einsiedlerhof. USAFE/FM handpicked **Capt Dan Sheesley** from the 100th CPTS at RAF Mildenhall to be the first JTF FM. He clearly had the *right stuff*, combining a wealth of leadership with FSO, budget officer, and Top Dollar training. As the JTF spun up from a handful of individuals to over 160 personnel, he made things happen! He set the staff up with everything from computers and portable air conditioners to cell phones, billeting, and rental cars. Downrange, he was just as dynamic providing much needed mail transportation, force protection barriers, STU-IIIs, and lumber for refugee camp construction. Capt Sheesley's coordination at every level from wing and MAJCOM to JTF and Air Staff helped ensure accurate oversight of over \$20M in JTF operations.

Moving to sustainment of 850 forward-deployed personnel, we are preparing for more *normal* FM operations. We anticipate increasing the staff to 4-5, including the JTF FM position, which will move downrange. The FM tent now has a field phone, hard line for computer, fax, and copier capability. Payday lists are produced and deployed personnel are asking LES-type questions—did CZTE and IDP start, etc. Other lessons learned include:

- Absolutely send your very *best* personnel—this is the real Top Dollar and why FM exists to support airpower operations. Our folks had deployed before and had worked in virtually every section of FM. They also had passports and were 9mm qualified—something that cannot be had overnight.

- In the European theater and future OOTW, the need for a mini-logdet kit with a one-drawer safe is paramount. Units should anticipate the capability of single agent operations, in addition to the Top Dollar 5-7 man package. We have supported seven real-world deployments in the last 16 months, from mid-air plane crashes to embassy bombings, and every time, the one-drawer, one person package was proven successful.

- Unit deployment monitors should review all eligible personnel. We use a spreadsheet with the usual mobility requirements, plus passports, 9mm, other remarks, etc. You should verify personnel status, especially single parents and child care designations, powers of attorney, etc. We also set up notional pairings of agents and cut checks in advance to minimize departure preparations.

- With gross commitments to date exceeding \$8.6M in our OBAN, regular updates have been critical to monitoring expenses. Capturing IMPAC cards expenditures was somewhat challenging but daily coordination and reporting with the deployed agents and COs worked well.

In closing we need to remember, ours is a profession of arms. FM personnel directly supported JTF SHINING HOPE, in-country from day one, and performed superbly at all levels. The last two months have rocketed by with 14-16 hour days being routine. Daily meetings with CPTS and JTF-FM personnel coincident with call-ins from our agents downrange, kept us all on the same sheet of music. Selectively staffing key billets with financial managers of broad experience and Top Dollar trained has made all the difference.